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S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

Q U E E N

At St. J A M E S's,

O N

Munday JANUARY 31. 1703.

B E I N G T H E

Anniversary of the Martyrdom of
King C H A R L E S the First.

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PROV. XXIV. 21.

My Son, Fear thou the Lord, and the King; and meddle not with them that are given to change.

THE Fear of God, and of the King, are joyned together in Scripture, to shew the Dependence one has upon the other. The only lasting Foundation of Civil Obedience, is the Fear of God; and the truest Interest of Princes, is to maintain the Honour of Religion, by which they secure their own. The Advantage of Religion to all publick Societies and Civil Governments, is so plain and visible, that some have suspected it to be the only end of Religion; which they allow to be an excellent Contrivance of State, and a proper Remedy for the turbulent Humours and Passions of Men. And tho' we acknowledge Nobler and Better Ends of Religion, which respect another World; yet we must with Thankfulness to its Divine Author, own it to be excellently adapted to the Temporal Felicity of Private Men, and Publick Societies; *Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is the reproach of any People.* Prov. 14. 34.

If we look into the History of former times, we shall find the first Symptoms of Ruin and Destruction, have appear'd in the dissolute Lives of the People, and a general Contempt of Sacred things. Irreligion naturally tends to Disorder and Confusion; for all Civil and Moral Duties, are founded in the Principles of Religion; which once overthrown, nothing remains but pure Force and Power, to restrain the untuly Appetites of Men: A way of Governing neither Safe to the Prince, nor Easy to the People; and therefore can never last long. Duties which flow from fix'd and settled Principles, must always be the same; the Ob-



figuration arising from them unalterable; from the Practice of which, will follow Order and Regularity. But Interest and Passion are in continual Motion, and liable to infinite Changes; and Men who steer by them, can hold no steady Course of Action, but must be given to Change, as often as they are out of Humour or think the present State of things not proper to serve their turn. Therefore nothing but a Religious Sense of our Duty to God, and to our Governours, his Ministers on Earth, can keep us constant and upright in our Obedience. *Fear God and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change.*

I shall not consider the Duty of Fearing God, any further than as the Obedience due to our Superiors on Earth is included in it; and shall therefore confine myself to the following Particulars: To Consider,

First, What Obedience to our Governours is enjoined by the Law of God.

Secondly, How inconsistent with this Obedience the Practice of those Men is, who *are given to Change.*

First, What Obedience to our Governours, is enjoined by the Law of God.

Obedience is seen chiefly in Three Things:

1st. In Submission to the Laws and Commands of our Princes.

2^{dly}. In Honour and Reverence to their Persons and Government.

3^{dly}. In defending them, when any Danger threatens them or the Publick.

The First and Principal Instance of Obedience, is Submission to the Laws and Commands of our Princes. To determine the Original of Civil Power, or how the Prince's Right to the Obedience of the Subject first began, is neither Easy, nor at this time Necessary. But whatever the Original of Government has been, or upon what account soever Lawful Authority has been Gained; upon the same, Obedience becomes due. At the time our Saviour appeared in the World, various

were the Forms of Government in it, and different the Degrees of Power that were exercised by Rulers over different Countries; none of which were either lessened or increased by the Divine Law, but all pronounc'd to be the Ordinance of God; and Obedience to all exacted under the Penalty of disobeying God, the Original of all Power and Authority; *For he that resisteth, resisteth the Ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation.* Rom. 13. 2.

But since the Nature of Obedience is no where determin'd by the Law of God, but only the Practice of it commanded; some other Rule there must be, to judge of the Extent of our Duty. As in Moral Virtues, the Light of Nature and Right Reason inform us what is Temperance, Sobriety, and the like; and and therefore these Virtues are commanded in Scripture, and in most Cases, Men left to their Natural Notions of Good and Evil, to distinguish between the Virtue and the Vice: So likewise must the Acts of Obedience, which the Law of God commands, be explained and defined by some other Rule. When the Jews put that Captious Question to our Saviour, *Whether it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, or no*; he gave no new Directions, but judg'd them out of their own Mouths by the known Rules of Government: For they having owned the Coin of their Country to bear Cæsar's Image and Superscription, a manifest Token of their Subjection, and his Sovereignty; he determined, *Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsars.* Agreeable to which is the Apostle's Rule, *Tribute, to whom Tribute is due.* Our Saviour took it not upon him to determine the Civil Right of Cæsar; but the Right appearing, Obedience and Compliance he commanded. The Rights of Princes are not determined in Scripture; and therefore in Questions of Right, the Scripture is no Rule.

The measure then of Power and Authority must be the Rule of Obedience: Whatever the Prince can lawfully Command, the Subject is bound to obey. The

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Things which are God's, must be render'd unto God ; and therefore no Divine Law, declared either by the clear Light of Nature, or express Revelation, can be superseded by the Command of any Earthly Power. Which whenever it is the Case, we must obey God rather than Man ; and be content with the Lot of them who suffer for Well-doing. To reason abstractedly upon the Power of Princes, is a sign of Weakness, as well as of a troublesome Temper. Custom, and the Law of the Land in each Country, are in this Case the highest Reason ; under which Regulations, the Power of all Princes is Lawful and Reasonable. Were it otherwise the Gospel, which was intended for the Law of all Nations and People, cou'd not have commanded Obedience to the present Powers, which were in Form and Authority vastly different.

All Obedience is primarily owing to God, the Fountain of all Power : And shou'd it please him to take upon himself the Personal Government of Nations ; as he did sometime of the People of the *Jews* ; all other power wou'd cease of Course. In the Jewish Government ; the Laws of Civil and Ecclesiastical Polity were Divine, being established by God, when he took upon himself the External Government of that People. But where God did not so visibly interest himself, but committed the Reins of Government to Earthly Princes ; the making Laws for the External and Visible Order of the World, was remitted to their Authority. And therefore the Gospel, tho' infinitely more perfect than the Law, gave us no System of Laws, either for Civil or Ecclesiastical Government : Which under the Law were ordained by God, (not as Supreme Governor of the World, but as the immediate and visible Governor of the *Jews*) ; But under the Gospel, are left to Princes, who are appointed by God to be the Visible Governors of the World ; and therefore all Visible and External Order, is their proper Care and Business. Of Obedience, there are two parts ; the External and Internal. The Ex-
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ternal

ternal consists in the Outward Conformity of our Actions to the Rules and Principles of Virtue; The Internal, in the Sincerity and Purity of the Heart. The Government of the World is not concerned in the Internal Part; for if Men act as if they were Honest, the Peace and outward Order of the World will be secured, tho' their Hearts are perverse; And therefore, the Judgment of this, God, as he alone is able for it, has reserved to himself. The External Part of *Obedience* is that, in the due Performance of which the Beauty and Order of the World consists; and therefore this is the proper Care of the Governours of the World. The same holds in Religion, which is the Service of God: There are Duties which none are concerned in, but God and our own Souls; such as Faith, Repentance, and the like; the Virtue of which is Internal, of the Heart. But God requires likewise an External and Visible Worship from us, in which outward Order and Decency are *required*, but not *determined*, 1 Cor. 14. 40. and therefore must be left to their Jurisdiction, to whom we are answerable for our outward Behaviour in all things. How far mistaken then is the Zeal of those, who decline submitting to the Orders of the Church, because they are of Humane Appointment! Whereas being Ordain'd by a Lawful Power, they have so far the Stamp of Divine Authority, as to make Disobedience to them a Sin against God.

The second Instance of Obedience, is to Honour and Reverence our Governours; to think with Respect, and speak with Decency, of their Persons and Governments. This Duty we owe to all our Superiors, in proportion to their Dignity and Office. If we look up to the Fountain and Original of all Power, the Supreme Governour of the World; his *Name*, even to mention in vain shall not be held guiltless. Next to him, tho' the Distance be great, are the Supreme Powers on Earth; to whom we owe the greatest *Civil* Respect and Reverence; according to the Apostle's Rule,

Rule, to render Honour, to whom Honour; Fear, to whom Fear is due: Whose Names or Persons to treat with Contempt, is Want of Decency, as well as Duty. Two Things have a Right to Honour and Respect; Personal Virtues; and Publick Characters; which when happily joined together, are to be accounted *worthy of double Honour*: But when separate, are not to be defrauded of their due Portion. When St. Paul, provoked by the unjust Usage of the High-Priest, returned him a rude Answer; being inform'd what Place he held in the Commonwealth, he corrected, and excus'd his Error; *I wist not, Brethren, that He was the High-Priest: For it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the Ruler of thy People, Acts 23. 5.*

The third Instance of Obedience, is in Defending the Persons and Government of our Princes.

Mutual Defence is the End of all Government. Protection in Life and Fortune, is the Right of every Subject: Which, as he may lawfully expect from his Prince; so is he bound to him, in the like Duty of Defending his Person and Government, whenever Occasion requires. When Men entred into Civil Society, they resigned all their Private Right and Interest, even in their own Lives, to the Publick Good: And therefore the Publick Happiness is to be preferr'd before our own; the Life of the Publick, which consists in maintaining the Establish'd Form of Government, to be Supported, tho' with the Loss of our own. The Prince bears the Person of the Commonwealth; by him the Publick lives and acts; therefore is his Life Sacred: Which *but* coldly to Defend, is Want of Affection to the Publick, and Treason against the Original Laws of all Government. And if the Sense of Honour be not mightily changed; to Die for our Prince or our Country, is to fall with Glory, and challenges Respect to our Memory, from all Posterity.

To maintain the Establish'd Form of Government, is the First and Highest Duty of Men Acting in Society.

To remove the Ancient Land-marks of Power and Obedience, tends to the utter Ruin and Destruction of all Government ; and is an Injury to the Prince, as well as Disobedience to his Power ; who acquires a Personal Right and Interest in the Privileges descending with the Crown. But this will more properly fall under the Second Head ; which was to consider,

How Inconsistent with the Obedience required, the Practice of those Men is, *who are given to change.*

No Government was ever so perfectly formed at first, as to answer all Occasions : The Wisdom of Man not reaching far enough to view all the possible Variety of Circumstances, that may require the Mitigating, or Increasing, the Severity of Old Laws ; or the Making New. Therefore it is necessary for the Publick Good, that there shoud be a Power lodged somewhere, to adapt Old Laws to the present Circumstances, or those which may hereafter arise. Thus to Change, is an Act of Lawful Power ; and therefore falls not within the Charge of the Text, *Not to meddle with them that are given to change.*

But then the most Beneficial and Necessary Changes must be begun, promoted, and perfected, by Lawful Authority ; or else they lose their Good Quality, and, like wholsom Remedies unduly applied, prey upon the Vitals of the Government. For no Change can be so Beneficial in its Consequence, as Usurping upon Lawful Authority is Destructive ; and therefore it becomes a good Subject to bear any Inconvenience arising from the present Constitution, rather than, by too precipitately Throwing it off, to prevent the Regular Methods of Alteration. To pretend Publick Good, is common to all Factions and Parties ; and therefore can excuse None : And where the Pretence is Real ; yet to seek Publick Good, in Opposition to Publick Authority, is like Curing Distempers by Destroying the Patient.

To view with Pleasure the Factions and Disturbances of a Kingdom; and, like the Lame and Impotent at the Pool of *Berbesda*, to long for the troubling of the Waters, that we may step first in, and make some private Advantage of the publick Calamities, is neither the part of a Good Man, or a Good Christian.

To encourage the Seditious Principles and Practices of others: tho' cunning Men may do it without Danger, yet they can never do it without Guilt.

These Practices need not to be brought near, to be compared with the Duty of Obedience: They appear at first Sight to have nothing less in them, than Honour and Reverence, or Obedience, to the Prince.

The Authority of the Prince is as much concerned in Maintaining the Honour and Order of God's Service, as of his own: And the Noblest Character that belongs to Princes, is that of *Nursing Fathers and Mothers* to the Church of Christ; the Peace and Order of which, is at once the Splendor and Security of a Government: And therefore the Advice of the Text, *Not to meddle with them who are given to change*, must be extended to the Government of the Church, as well as of the State. And the Occasion of this Solemnity gives but too much Reason for this Application; the Alterations intended and practis'd upon the Church, influencing not a little in the Barbarous Treason which we this day Lamented.

There must in the Church, as in the State, be a Power to Change whatever, through Use and Experience, appears unfit for the End it was design'd. To propose and procure Amendments to the Laws of the Church, when there is occasion for it, is their Duty in whose Hands the Power is lodged; and Changes so effected, can never be to the Blemish or Dishonour of the Church. But when Men dislike without Reason, and obstinately condemn whatever has been settled by

by Authority; when they disclaim the Power and all the Acts of the Church; either their Ignorance must be Invincible, or their Guilt Unpardonable.

The Reason of all Changes ought to be very Plain and Apparent; lest Lightness and Wantonness, in altering Old Laws, bring Power and Authority into Contempt. To Change is the Effect, and the sign of Weakness: and therefore it is the Character of the most perfect Being, that in him is no Variableness, or Shadow of

Turning. Often to Change, will always breed Contempt: and therefore, in Private Life, Wise Men chuse rather to bear some Inconveniencies arising from the Way they are settled in, than, by shifting from one Course to another, to gain little but the Character of Unsteadiness, and want of Resolution. Much less should publick Bodies hazard their Credit by unnecessary Changes; and for the sake of removing one Unpolish'd Stone, endanger the whole Building; which how it will settle on a new Foundation, the Wisdom of Man cannot foresee. Some Inconveniencies in the Establishment of Publick Societies, like some Distempers in the Body, are born with less Danger than they are cured.

To plead for Alterations of seemingly greater Purity and Perfection, carries with it such an Appearance of Goodness and Concern for the Service of God, as will never fail to engage the Favour of the Multitude; who always make up in Zeal what they want in Knowledge: which is, and will be a Temptation to Men, who are incapable of a better, to take this way to raise themselves in the Esteem of the People.

To press for Alterations, when most things in the present Establishment are owned to be good, and all tolerable, is not the effect of much Judgment. If want of Perfection be a Reason to Change; it will be a Reason for ever: for since all the Laws of the Church are not of Divine Institution, they have too great a Mixture of Weakness in their Original, ever to be perfect in themselves. And shou'd all the Changes desired, be granted,

granted, let not Men imagine that the next Age will be so unlike this, as not to find fault with the Orders of their Superiors.

It is unaccountable in Reason, that in Matters of Religious Government, every Man thinks himself judge of what is Decent and Convenient, and what fit to be Obeyed; whereas in Matters of Civil Government, whatever they act, they dare not pretend to the same discretionary Power: As if the Case were not the same in both; and Obedience in all things lawful and honest, (further than which, no Man's private judgment extends) in both of like Necessity.

How the Common People are led into the esteem of Men thus acting, is not hard to say. To suffer for ones Opinion, right or wrong, is in the eyes of the Vulgar meritorious: And since some outward Advantages are forfeited, by not Complying with the present Establishment; shou'd Men, even for Worldly Interest, and want of Merit sufficient to rise in the lawful and regular Way, strike out new Paths to themselves; yet they shall be sure, among their Followers, to have the Character of Honest Men, Men suffering for Conscience sake. And tho' there be no Suffering in the Case; no Punishment attending upon such Practices; yet whilst Rewards are open to the Obedience of others, the partiality of Men will make them apter to repine at the Distinction, than to be thankful for the Impunity.

As long as Men are weak enough to be misled; and the Errors of some are profitable to others; there will be no end of Dissentions: And should the Restlessness and Importunity of Men once break in upon the Constitution, the Event cou'd only shew where it wou'd end.

To what Extremes the Humour of Men once set on Changing will run, the Mournful Occasion of this Day's Meeting is too sensible a proof. The Actors in the late Troubles thought of nothing less when they began,

began, than the Event that succeeded: The Good of the Publick, and of the King, was the Pretence; and they never left seeking it, till they had Ruined the Publick, and laid *His* Royal Head low. With the same Good Success, the Purity of the Church was promoted; which ended in its utter Subversion, and the Blood of a Great Prelate.

Great indeed in many Respects: but He sunk under the Iniquity of the Times, by endeavouring to give Life to the long-forgotten and neglected Discipline of the Church; when the Liberty and Licentiousness of the Age cou'd bear nothing less. The Reformation had given such a Turn to weak Heads, that had not Weight enough to poise themselves between the Extremes of Popery and Phanaticism; that every thing older than Yesterday, was look'd upon to be Popish and Antichristian: The meanest of the People aspired to the Priesthood; and were readier to Frame New Laws for the Church, than Obey the Old. This led Him to some Acts of great Severity, that He might create an Authority, and Reverence for the Laws, when it shou'd appear they had not quite lost their Edge. Thus He became too generally Hated, and Fall He must: for His Faults were Great, and, as the Times went, Unpardonable; He loved the *Church*, and the *King*.

His Case might deserve more to be Lamented, did not that which followed, bury all private Injuries and Resentments; in respect of which, the former *Cruelties were tender Mercies*. The Thirst for Blood was too Great, to be satisfied with the Fall of private Men: nor cou'd the new Schemes of Confusion take place, till the Fountain of Lawful Power and Authority was dried up. Every Man had a Project of his own for a New Government: and rather than be disappointed, they resolved to lay the Foundation in Royal Blood.

Could all the Obligations of Nature and Religion have prevailed, the King might have lived to make his

his People Happy : but the Misfortune was, they had Injured Him too much, to trust Him even with his own Life ; nor cou'd their Consciences give them security for the Mischiefs already done, but in going on still to add Murder and Parricide, and in destroying the Power, they had too much Reason to Fear. A Barbarous Cruelty ! of which it is hard to say, whether the Malice and Wickedness, with which it was Acted, were greater ; or the Patience and Magnanimity, with which it was Born. As if the Contest had been, Whether Human Nature were capable of greater Degrees of Virtue, or Vice.

View the King from the Throne to the Scaffold : and He was in His Life the Pattern of a Good Prince ; in His Death, of a Good Christian. He was a Prince, who, from the Sweetness of His Temper, the Integrity of His Intentions, and a kind and tender Concern for the Meanest of His Subjects, might well have expected to make His Name dear to this Nation, and His Memory Glorious, upon a better Account than the History of this Day affords. He was formed by Nature and Grace to be an Ornament of Better Times ; and wanted nothing to make Him Great in the Worst, those He lived in, but a just Resentment of the Indignities He suffered. The only Prerogative His Enemies had left Him, was to forgive the Injuries they did Him ; which He exercised to the last ; and in the Heat of a Merciless Rebellion, cou'd never forget his Enemies were his Subjects, when they had long since forgot Him to be their King : which was too great a Byass upon the Minds of indifferent Men, when they saw the only way to escape being punish'd, was to take the course that deserved it.

They, who consider the Happy and Envied Condition of our Government, in which are equally secured, the Dignity of the Prince, and the Liberty of the Subject ; the Blessing of a Church Establish'd in Primitive Purity, wherein the Honour of Religion and
God's

God's Service is maintain'd without Superstition; Obedience taught without Blindness; can never sufficiently Reverence the Memory of a Prince, who chose rather to lay down his Crown and his Life, than not deliver down these Blessings Inviolable to Posterity. They, who remember Him, without any partial Affection, must allow Him the Character of a Noble and Generous Prince, and Father of his Country. They, who think with Envy, and speak with Malice, of Him, can say no worse, than, *He was a Man of like Passions with us.* And surely they forgot themselves to be Men, who would have our *Common* Infirmities remembered to His Dishonour.

The Case is hard, if Princes have no Right to the Allowances made to all besides: Harder, because, by their High Station, they are more exposed to the View of the World; and Few there are so Modest, as not to think themselves Wise enough to judge of their Actions. Private persons have their Inclinations free from all Checks and Restraints, more than Innocence and Religion require: their Rule is, To preserve Integrity, and it will preserve them. But Men of Character have this further Care, *That their Good be not Evil spoken of:* A Lesson of infinitely more Difficulty, and greater Toil, by how much harder it is to please *Men* than *God*. To seek the good Opinion of the People, is Prudence in Men of Publick Characters: But is there a greater Slavery under the Sun, than to be obliged to live by the Opinion of those, who are neither Wise enough to judge, nor to let it alone?

The Privilege that extends to the meanest Cottage, to chuse their own Friends and Companions, is not without Murmuring allowed to Kings: nor will it be permitted to the Dignity of some Characters, and Majesty of others, to stoop even to the innocent and harmless Enjoyments of Life: As if Princes and Great Ministers had no *Private* Cares; but were capable of the constant Thoughts of publick Business, and Religion.

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Every Step Men take, by which they rise into the View of the World, is an Abridgment of their Innocent Liberty, and binds them to a Stricter and Severer Self-denial. For there is a Natural Envy in Men, which loves to see the Honour and Dignity of Great Places, qualified with Trouble and Anxiety.

But Men who are distinguish'd by the Advantages of Birth and Education, shou'd be above the common Prejudices, and sordid Passions of the Vulgar; and think themselves obliged, in Honour as well as Duty, to pay a Steady and Regular Obedience to the Government. It is some Excuse for the Dishonour of the Nation, in the late Rebellion, that we can shew so brave a List of Nobility and Gentry, who fell in Defence of their King; and let the Honour of their Death, a Nobler Inheritance to their Families, than their Lands and Estates. The Imitation of their Virtue and Obedience needs not to be press'd in *this* Audience; where the Rules of Duty and Honour are better Practis'd, than they can be Taught. The Noble Families have Examples of their own, to instruct them how *they* should behave themselves to their Prince and their Country: And in the History of their Ancestors, may learn, that *Loyalty to the Crown*, is the First and the Noblest Title of Honour. And surely thus much Good we may expect from the Evil of the late Times; that Men would learn at length to value the Blessing of a Good Prince.

'Tis the Goodness of God to us, that after so many Convulsions, we still enjoy our Ancient Government; that there is still Life and Vigor in the Religion and Liberty of *England*. A Goodness that on our part requires the utmost Returns of Gratitude; which can no way be so Acceptably shown, as in the worthy Use of the Blessings we Enjoy. We shall but ill perform the Duty of this Day, unless we amend in our selves the Errors we reprove in others. The *Crown* and the *Virtues* of the Royal Martyr are once more joined together:

ther : Let not then our Reproach be renewed by the repeated want of Obedience and Affection. If, whilst our Governours watch with Care and Solitude; to make us Easy and Happy in our selves; Strong and Secure against our Enemies Abroad; we labour to Disturb the Methods of our Government at Home; we must thank our selves for the Evils, which will always follow from the Turbulent Humours, and Distracted Councils of a Nation. We have an *Enemy* Strong and Cunning to deal with; an Ancient *Rival* of the Power and Honour of *England*; an Enemy to the Religion of Protestants, and the *Liberty* of Mankind: And if nothing else will, yet Interest shou'd, prevail with us to Unite for our Mutual Safety: and whilst our Brave Countrymen expose their Lives to the Hazard and Fortune of War *Abroad*, in Defence of their Prince, and their Country; methinks the least that can be expected of us, is to be Quiet and Peaceable at Home. To save the sinking Liberties of *Europe*, is worthy a Queen of *England*; and if the Spirit of our Fathers be not Degenerate in us, it will, it must rise to check the Progress of an Ambitious Monarch; and it will ever be the Choice of an *Englishman*, rather to die by his *Sword*, than live by his *Law*. But our *Lives* and our *Fortunes* are safe in the Conduct and Prudence of our Governours; we need only Sacrifice our *ill Humours*, to the Peace and Security of our Country; and be content to *stand still*, and see the *Salvation* of the *Lord*. Let us at least, be *willing* to be Saved; and for the Sake and Defence of our Religion; submit to live by the Rules of it. We have been long Fighting and Contending for our Religion; 'tis now high time to Practise it; and a better Foundation we cannot lay than in the Duties of the Text, *To Fear the Lord, and the King; and not to meddle with them, that are given to Change.*

F I N I S.



